

knowledge construction processes, and the thinking and problem solving processes that underpin this, are complemented by other key competencies, such as learning:

- how teams work together in safety and security
- how to deal with team issues such as conflict, for example, when someone edits a collaborative piece without justification or explanation
- negotiation skills, such as a group negotiating to agree on correctness, meaning, relevance of ideas that individuals are posing
- team management and project management competencies, such as planning, creating and staying with timelines, role assignments, and delegation responsibilities

- group communication protocols
- document management and version management procedures.

The technical momentum is there, but the intellectual momentum is needed to ensure that these tools are integrated thoughtfully into students' learning with meaningful inquiry tasks and the appropriate development of the analytical, critical thinking, and reflective scaffolds to construct meaning and understanding.

A key challenge is to lead, and demonstrate the rich educational potential, and document evidence of significant learning outcomes, including virtual publishing and broadcasting of newly gained knowledge and skills. Our research columns in recent issues has focused on evidence based practice and reflective practice, with teacher librarians leading the way. The column in this issue of *Scan* continues that important work. ■

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Kindergarten weaves a wiki: the learners tell their stories



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Scan, he has returned to teacher librarianship after four years in the classroom. In this article, Ian describes how he collected and interpreted research data from 12 Early Stage 1 (Kindergarten) students, tracking their emerging awareness of, and access to, the internet and Web 2.0 tools. An online wiki was used to create jointly constructed fables, and to share the

final products (and the annotated learning journey) with the extended school community - and beyond.

In his PowerPoint presentation about evidence based practice, 'Knowing and showing how school library programs help students learn' (2004), Dr Todd advocates that educators make use of:

- exhibitions and displays of products, plus student self assessments of learning
- putting up 'the story' of learning, as well as the products of new learning
- letting the 'voices' of students tell the story (Todd, 2004).

Can the use of a wiki in literacy activities raise Early Stage 1 students'

awareness of information communication technologies? Can it also facilitate the students' interactions with parents and caregivers about the literacy outcomes being achieved at school? The development of Web 2.0 tools provides multiple opportunities for teacher librarians to demonstrate their educational potential and impact.

Literature review: a selection of quotations

In the 2006 document, *Our young learners: giving them the best possible start: an education strategy for the early years from Kindergarten to Year 4, 2006–2009*, the New South Wales Department of Education & Training takes the position that

Young children are eager to learn. We must continue to nurture the

curiosity they bring to learning, focus on building confidence and ensuring success, and help instill in our young learners a strong love of learning.

Our young learners, (2006), p. 2.

What does the professional literature say about young students and Web 2.0?

Young people have unsophisticated mental maps of what the Internet is, often failing to appreciate that it is a collection of networked resources from different providers...

Rowlands & Nicholas, 2008, p. 12

At the same time, they

are interested in and quickly become adept at applying new technologies.'

Our young learners, 2006, p. 3

Constant connectivity - being in touch with friends and family at any time and from any place - is of utmost importance.

Frاند, p. 15

Projecting forward to these students entering secondary school in a few years time, they will

... demand involving, dynamic and personalised content experiences that can compete with the likes of Facebook.

CIBER, pp. 45-46

or its evolving and future equivalents.

Members of the so-called Google Generation

... are more competent with technology... have very high expectations of ICTs... [and] prefer interactive systems...

Rowlands & Nicholas, 2008, p. 18

Implications for home and school interactions

Three behaviours exemplify children's prosocial interactions: accepting peer ideas, making friends, and comforting others.

West, Denton & Reaney, 2001, p. 14

Quality teaching and close partnerships between schools and parents, underpinned by the highest of expectations, will support each student to experience a successful educational journey through the early years of schooling.

Our young learners, 2006, p. 2

Our approach... needs to acknowledge the significance of family and community in a child's education

Our young learners, 2006, p. 14

It is predicted that, by 2017, the internet

will have come of age for all ages and be completely integrated into most homes.

Rowlands & Nicholas, 2008, p. 26

Implications for teaching and learning

Young children need knowledge and new experiences to develop and thrive. Schools offer a plethora of learning and development opportunities for children.

West, Denton & Reaney, 2001, p. 25

Going virtual is critical... if libraries are not to become obsolete...

British Library Press Room, 2008, p. 1

In fact, the way forward [would seem to include] ... trying things out in the digital space, monitoring the reaction and adjusting accordingly.

Rowlands & Nicholas, 2008, p. 31

[At the same time, the] library community needs to invest more in data collection and analysis...

Emerging research findings from the US points to the fact that these [information] skills need to be inculcated during the formative years of childhood... This will require concerted action between libraries, schools and parents.

Rowlands & Nicholas, 2008, p. 32

Aims, context and participants

In Term Four 2007, Early Stage 1 (Kindergarten) students at Penrith Public School were involved in the

creation of jointly constructed fables with the teacher librarian. Character generation was through Circle time discussions (McLean, 2007), addressing the English K-6 syllabus talking and listening outcomes, plus drama and drawing activities.

OASIS Web Enquiry was used to research fables (McLean, 2008), and explicit teaching ensured that students knew about Aesop's fables traditionally including a moral, or lesson, at the end. Four fables would be jointly constructed using, as themes, the four school core values of learning, cooperating, respect and environment.

An online wiki was set up to collate ideas, write and edit the narratives (addressing English K-6 syllabus writing outcomes), and present the final drafts of the fables to an international audience via the internet. Circle time was used to evaluate the unit orally, with the teacher librarian scribing students' responses to pre- and post-test questionnaires.

The establishment of a free wiki space, supplied by pbwiki and accessible through a teacher level username and password via the Departmental computers, enabled ICT to be used in drafting and publishing the students' joint constructions. At the same time, the wiki provided a public platform for

- exhibiting the students' final literary products
- sharing the teacher librarian's and students' reflections of their learning
- displaying written feedback from other student groups
- providing online access by the wider community
- easily updating the parallel version of the story of learning as it was taking place.

A wiki, from the Hawaiian term wiki-wiki, meaning quick, quick, resembles a virtual scrapbook of written text and images. The ease of uploading, editing and dating new entries in this form of

Web 2.0 supercedes earlier forms of websites created for the internet. A wiki owner can provide passwords to specify which individuals are permitted to contribute (with original or previous versions of texts easily restored if the owner disagrees with the changes or additions). Wikis also encourage feedback comments from the general public or nominated groups (and such comments can be moderated or edited). Unlike web pages uploaded via FTP facilities, wikis are extremely user friendly, and require neither knowledge of HTML (hyper text markup language), nor the uploading process. Resultant changes are more readily visible to student users.

The beginning

The only way of discovering the limits of the possible is to venture a little way past them into the impossible.

Arthur C. Clarke, Second law of prediction

The roots of this research project were laid down as the result of this writer attending two versions of a presentation on Web 2.0 at NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) conferences in October and November 2007. There was an emphasis on the advantages of using blogs and wikis for teaching and learning. At the conclusion of 'Web 2.0 for learning', the presenters, Ruth Mason (DET) and Grant Casey (TAFE), challenged attendees: *what will you do next week to incorporate wikis or blogs in your teaching?*

Committing to face this challenge, I was able to upgrade an intended literacy unit of work for Early Stage 1 students, which originally required joint constructions of fables to be created using butcher's paper. Instead, a set of wiki pages was established. The wiki would be used for scribing

all brainstorming, drafting, editing and publishing. It would also provide ongoing exhibiting of four core values fables to a wide (often unknown) audience.

My driving thought was: If I wait till I'm ready, I'll never be ready.

I knew very little about wikis, and the school did not

Wikis also encourage feedback

comments...

yet have access to an interactive whiteboard (IWB), but I felt that a small bank of computers in the library, connected to the school's network and the internet, would be sufficient.

At the same time, I had a unique opportunity to administer brief pre- and post-test survey questions about the students knowledge of the internet and Web 2.0, which would also capture the students' personal reflections and emotional responses of their learning. In this, I was inspired by the work of Lee Fitzgerald in the area of guided inquiry (Fitzgerald, 2007), and various online book raps run by the School Libraries and Information Literacy Unit of the NSW Department of Education and Training.

Past and current K-6 school based programs which also supported this unit included:

- Circle time (especially for character generation and student reflections of the learning process)

- thinking skills, including brainstorming
- factual writing, especially deconstructing types of texts (English K-6)
- hot seat drama activities
- Penrith Public School's K-2 cyclic program - nursery rhymes, fairy tales, dreaming stories, fables.

Finally, at the *School Libraries Leading Learning* conference (2008), jointly presented by the School Libraries & Information Literacy Unit (NSW Department of Education and Training) and ASLA (NSW) Inc., opening keynote speaker, Dr Ross Todd, challenged the attendees to

- have a clear vision for the future of learning we wish to see in our schools, with the teacher librarian in a leadership role
- build from our own experience, and learn by doing
- chart the learning by demonstrating excellence through evidence based practice.

These points helped to clarify and analyse my research results, and to shape this article.

Methodology and procedures for gathering data

Circle time was used to administer short answer, pre- and post- test questionnaires. The teacher librarian scribed answers.

Pre-test results and interpretations

1. Do you have the internet at home?

Answer	Tally	Additional comments (scribed from oral)
Yes	5	1 x 'Dad has the internet on his computer.' 1 x 'We have two; one is only for my sister to use.' 3 x (No comment)
No	5	1 x 'I don't have the internet at home, but Mr McLean does and we are here in the school library.' 4 x (No comment)
Don't know	2	

Ignoring the two students who were unable to make a definitive statement about access to the internet in their house, there were equal numbers supporting Yes and No.

Note that only one quarter of the students was able to articulate a sentence about their knowledge of the internet, even with teacher prompting.

2. Why are we using a wiki to write and publish our core value fables?

Initially, this question received no responses, so a brief demonstration of how a wiki page works was required to enable the students to attempt to articulate a response.

- 'I don't know. It gets done quicker and you don't have to draw the pictures again and again.'
- 'If you write letters wrong it's quicker and easier to fix errors.'
- 'It gives us ideas.'
- 'It will help the new person to catch up on what he missed last week.'
- 'It's easier to just print the story when we are finished.'
- 'It's quick to get the job done and so we become famous.'
- 'You told us to.'
- 'It helps us to learn.'
- 'If we look at the badge we know who it belongs to.'
- 'It's really quick to write up what we are saying.'

These responses were encouraging, and gave me a list of attributes of wikis to reinforce with the students over the subsequent weeks.

3. What will we have learned when we have finished?

- 'We can talk about what we wrote.'
- 'How to be famous.'
- 'To write.'
- 'Which newspaper our photos will be in.'
- 'How to write and draw on the computer.'
- 'We can talk about what we did.'

- 'I don't know.'
- 'We will know all the stuff we've done.'
- 'We will have learned to read.'
- 'We will be able to type things on a wiki, like magic.'
- 'We will be learning to read.'

- 'We can read stories by reading stories.'

The students' fascination with instant international fame was probably reinforced by a local newspaper publishing our Stage 3 students' book reviews and photographs a few weeks earlier!

We selected the spotted zebra illustration (representing the school's Core Value of Respect) as the fable we knew most about already through our brainstorming. I pressed the Edit page button and started to type directly onto the wiki as the students selected what sentences should go next. Halfway through, I had hairs rising on my neck; it was feeling so... right. After a few sentences, someone suggested a line that I immediately realised was the last line of our fable. I told them we'd keep writing till we met that line again at the end. The story essentially wrote itself.

We re-read the story several times as we composed it, and again when we were finished, adding some minor editorial touches but, essentially, it's not much changed from the first draft.

Within about ten minutes of uploading the page, I noticed a link on the sidebar. Moving the mouse across the link, it highlighted a message: 'Visitor from California'. A few minutes later we had 'Visitor from New South Wales' and then 'Visitor from Norway'. I started getting the message as to how efficiently our little project was already reaching a world audience!

The next day we also had several new New South Wales visitors (several being me from home the previous night, I assume), then the enigmatic 'Visitor from parts unknown', and more from all parts of Europe.

'We famous!' became the students' catch cry. I keep reminding myself: they are five years old...

Ian McLean

Pre-test results and interpretations

1. Do you have the internet at home?

Answer	Tally	Additional comments (scribed from oral)
Yes	9	'It's Mum's.' 'We play games on it.' 'We read our wiki fables on it and printed out my picture and we sent it in an email to our friends in Canada.' 'It's for Mum and Doug to use.' 'But I don't use it.' 'Mum and Dad use it.' 'I showed Mum how to find our wiki.' 'We can play 'Cartoon Network' on it.' 1 x (No comment)
No	1	1 x (No comment)
Absent	2	2 x (No comment)

Quite dramatically, after only eight weeks of regular exposure to Web 2.0, 75% of the group (up from 25%) now knew that they did, indeed, have an internet connection in their home. Furthermore, the students could articulate with confidence about why they hadn't known about it in the past. For example, 'It's for Mum and Doug to use'.

At least two students reported that they were able to demonstrate typing the URL of the wiki page into an internet browser. At Grandparents' Day in Term One of 2008, several family members made a point of seeking out 'the wiki man in the library' to discuss how their children and grandchildren had spent numerous sessions sharing the content of the core values fables pages.

One parent noted that she was impressed that, although the joint constructions were at a level above her child's usual reading age, he was able to read all four pieces of text, and all hyperlinks on the wiki, with confidence. Together, her family composed an email about the wiki to overseas relatives, and downloaded the student's artwork to the hard drive.

2. Why did we use a wiki to write and publish our core value fables?

During the pre-test, this question had received no responses. In the post-test questionnaire, every student was able to articulate, with confidence, some responses:

- 'We use it to write stories.'
- 'We can show them to Mr Jackson [the Principal] and he can read them in his office on his computer.'
- 'It's easy to show more people our fables.'
- 'It's quicker. We can say what we want to happen and put it on there for everyone to read.'
- 'If you make a mistake it's easy to get it off. Paper can't do that. You'd have to rub it out.'
- 'You don't have to write much [in joint construction writing activities] and your arms don't get tired.'

- 'We can share them at home.'
- 'It's quicker. Easier. And I'm famous! It's on the computer and it only takes one day.'
- 'Pencils run out of lead.'
- 'It grows. On the weekend the teachers can read it at their house. Mr McLean can make things ready to see on Monday. He puts the links in.'
- 'We don't have to stay in our classroom.'

The students' perceptive responses highlight many advantages of using a wiki over a sheet of butcher's paper. The students understand that changes to a wiki page on one computer are readily accessible from any other computer connected to the network. Wikis are arguably a greener alternative for the environment, ('pencils run out of lead' and no wasted paper).

3. What did we learn when we had finished?

- 'It gets faster and easier. You still have to learn how to make words.'
- 'Tanaka's zebra picture helped us to write the fable.'
- 'We can show Mr Jackson [the Principal] how to see our fables on the wiki.'
- 'We need passwords for Kindergarten so we can use the internet. We have shown Mr Jackson how good we are.'
- 'It's quicker to write and easier to fix mistakes. Like pressing rewind on the video recorder.'
- 'It's quicker and you can use the computer at your house to read the wiki.'
- 'Wikis can be at everyone's house.'
- 'It's easier to be famous. Easy to fix problems. Easy to change your words.'
- 'I liked Daniel's idea of the cat and the ladder to write a fable.'

Again, the students' responses were very perceptive. As they brainstormed concepts and characters in *Circle time* for their fables, they were developing prosocial interactions, particularly in

their accepting of peer ideas, making friends, and comforting others. Tanaka's and Daniel's artworks are specifically mentioned above as being inspirational to the group, but there were many instances where the students appreciated each others' contributions in the circle, and reassured others if their idea needed to be modified to fit the story.

The students noted that the addition of graphics aided their group writing experiences, and that literacy skills are equally as important for on paper or online text construction. The students noted the ease with which internet projects can be shared with family and friends via the internet.

Our school had elected to create a generic password for the Early Stage 1 students' internet access. It was amusing that at least one student interpreted the high quality of the group's wiki work to be evidence that they deserved individual passwords, and that he intended to inform the principal of their needs.

4. What will we do next?

- 'Write more stories. Make more drawings.'
- 'Whatever we want!!! Make a book!'
- 'More drawings! Make lots more fables. Make a book with page numbers.'
- 'Write lots more stories on the computer.'
- 'More fables and more wikis.'
- 'Put coloured pictures in the wiki for all the other countries to see.'
- 'I'm going to another school next year but I'll tell Mum to bring me back every Monday and Thursday so we can do more work on the wiki.'

With many media commentators fearing the death of the book (Wyatt, 2008) due to the rising popularity of online books, especially the Kindle eBook reader, soaring prices of paper and distribution, and social networking, it is interesting to note that the Early Stage 1 students envisaged

turning their online texts into a book with page numbers.

I had deliberately asked the students to draw their final illustrations in black and white, so that we had access to print ready images for the school newsletter. Interestingly, they place a lot of importance on coloured artwork.

The final comment in the list belongs to a student who was departing to another school in a different suburb. His comment actually brought a parent up to school so she could understand why her child was insisting he needed to come back every Monday and Thursday throughout 2008.

Implications for practice

Can the use of a wiki in literacy activities raise students' awareness of information communication technologies?

Most definitely! The public profile for the Early Stage 1 students' wiki fables has continued throughout the next academic year. The wiki has become a teaching tool and invaluable resource for modelling during numerous lessons K-6 throughout the year.

Repeating the fables unit with a new cohort in Term Four of 2008, the new pre-test responses were of a much higher standard compared to 100% no response when first attempted in 2007.

For example, the new cohort has stated:

1. *Do you have the internet at home?*

Answer	Tally	Additional comments (scribed from oral)
Yes	8	4 x 'You can use internet to go on games/[name of game].' 1 x 'I look at Lego Star wars figures.' 1 x 'You can use the internet to do amazing stuff.' 1 x 'You can use internet to see scary things.' 1 x 'You can use the internet to print things out.'
No	4	3 x 'You can use internet to go on games.' 1 x 'When I was five, Mum said, "Wait till you're six" to use the internet. Now I'm six, she says, "Wait till you're seven".'
Don't know	0	

Note that even students who have claimed they do not currently have internet access at home were still able to describe its attributes, or make a statement about it.

Can the use of a wiki in literacy activities facilitate students' interactions with parents and caregivers about the literacy outcomes being achieved at school?

Again, a resounding 'Yes'. Without pre- and post-test questionnaires, the educator can offer little more than a gut feeling that changes have occurred. Gathering evidence (answers to specific questions) provided an important focus. In the last week of the unit in 2007, the students stated that they remembered that they had been quizzed before they started, and the questions provided an anchor for plotting their learning curves. During the unit, some students would often refer back to their assumptions that they didn't have the internet at home, and would boast about showing relatives and friends how to access the wiki pages.

Implications for young students using Web 2.0

Using the wiki for the fables unit has affirmed that young students can be assisted to form mental maps of what

the internet is, and to appreciate that it is a collection of networked resources from different providers. The school's wiki pages have enabled the school to annotate the students' learning, letting the voices of the students tell the story of their learning journey.

Implications for home and school interactions

The *Circle time* aspects of the students interacting as they brainstormed concepts and characters for their fables assisted the students with their prosocial interactions; particularly in their accepting of peer ideas, making friends, and comforting others.

Wikis do help to acknowledge the significance of family and community in a child's education. The wiki pages have enabled the school to provide an efficient, appealing and motivational online exhibition of student work that can be accessed from any internet computer.

Implications for teaching and learning

Our school community will continue to collect and analyse data in this area. The project appears to support emerging research findings (*Information behaviour of the researcher of the future*, 2008, p. 31-32) that information skills 'should be inculcated during the formative years of childhood' and requiring 'concerted action between libraries, schools and parents' to achieve this.

At the same time, Early Stage 1's core values fables wiki project is an encouraging example of how a teacher librarian can try things out in the digital space. Monitoring our students' reactions provided evidence of the achievement of literacy and ICT outcomes. Our wiki site has enabled us to put up our story of learning, in tandem with the products of that new learning.

A respect fable work sample with syllabus outcomes

English K-6 syllabus outcomes

V1 Enjoys creating a range of spoken and written texts.

TES1.1 Communicates with peers and known adults in informal situations and structured activities dealing briefly with familiar topics. (*Moving towards... TS1.1 Communicates with an increasing range of people for a variety of purposes on both familiar and introduced topics in spontaneous and structured classroom activities.*)

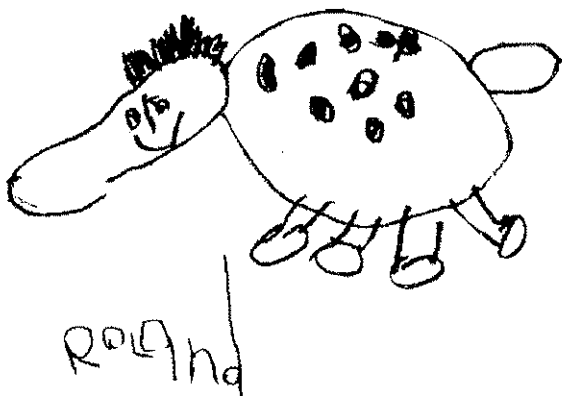
WES1.9 Engages in writing texts with the intention of conveying an idea or message. (*Moving towards... WS1.9 Plans, reviews and produces a small range of simple literary and factual texts for a variety of purposes on familiar topics for known readers.*)

In addition to the above, the following outcomes were also addressed by the project:

V4 shows confidence in using language in a variety of contexts

RES1.5 Demonstrates developing reading skills to short, predictable written texts on familiar topics (*Moving towards... RS1.5 Reads a wider range of texts on less familiar topics with increasing independence and understanding, making connections between own knowledge and experience and information in texts.*)

WES1.12 Produces most lower case and upper case letters and uses computer technology to begin to construct texts. (*Moving towards... WS1.12 Produces texts using letters of consistent size and slope in NSW Foundation Style and using computer technology.*)



A respect fable

by Early Stage 1 students at Penrith Public School, 2007

Once upon a time, there was a zebra who had black spots instead of stripes. All the other zebras laughed at him because he didn't have black stripes like them. The other zebras looked like white horses wearing pyjamas.

'We think you look ugly!' they said.

'Don't be so mean,' said the spotted zebra, crying. 'You make me feel sad when you tease me. I won't play with you if you are mean.'

The stripy zebras liked being stripy because it helped them to camouflage in the long grass. The black stripes looked the same as the shadows in the grass.

First of all, the spotty zebra tried to make coloured spots out of Playdoh. The Playdoh spots looked very colourful but then they all fell off.

Then he got the idea to squash blueberries, cherries, purple grapes, green grapes and tomatoes all over his black spots. He looked like a fruit salad!

The stripy zebras wanted to lick off all the squashed fruit and soon he was black-spotted again.

'Don't worry, you are still black and white just like us. We do like you.'

The moral is: Have respect for your friends' differences.

More fables are available at
Penrith Public School library's wiki <penrithpslibrary.pbwiki.com>. ■

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